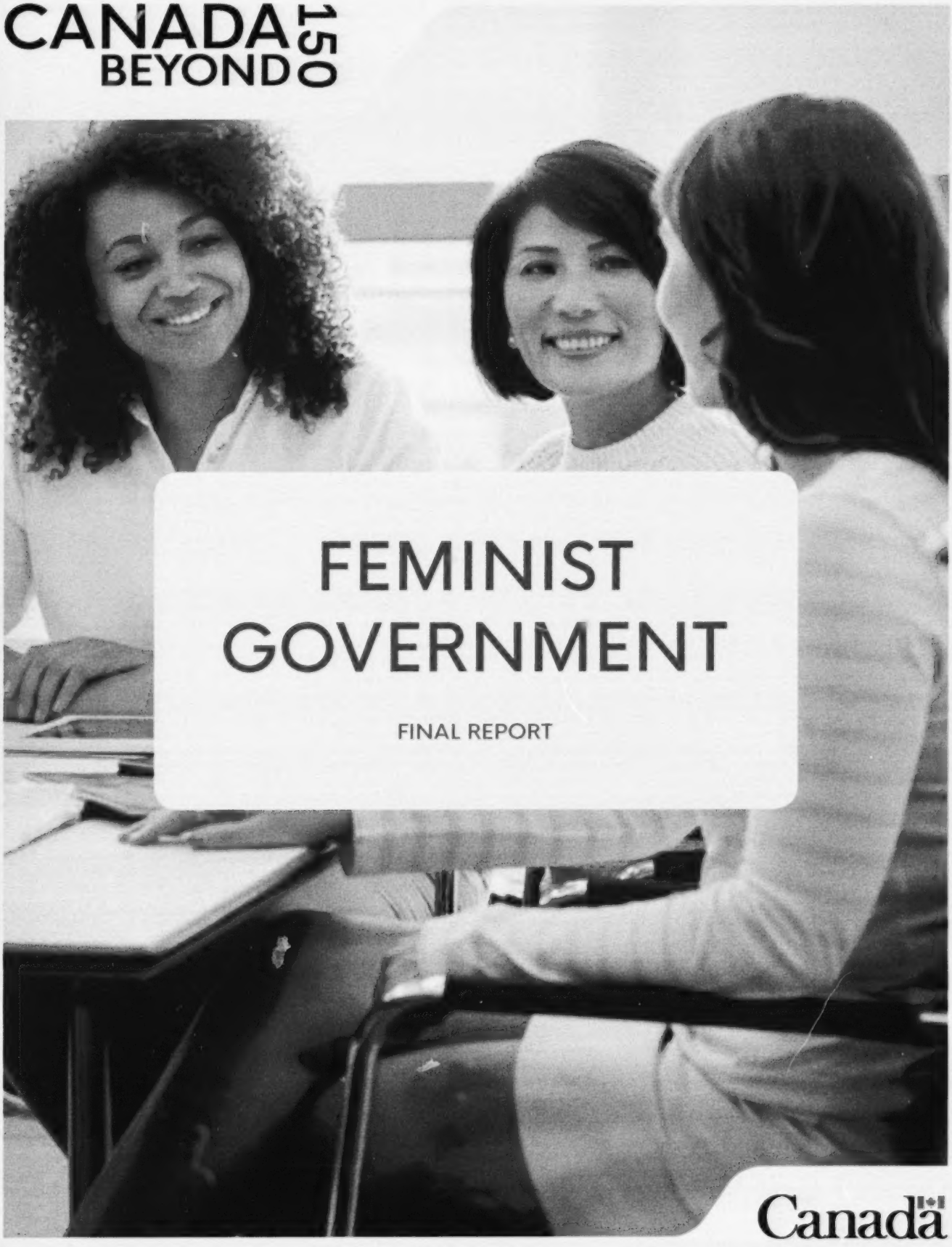
CANADA 150
BEYOND



FEMINIST GOVERNMENT

FINAL REPORT

Canada

FEMINIST GOVERNMENT

This document does not represent an official policy position of the Government of Canada. Instead, it records the work of a sub-group of new public servants who participated in Canada Beyond 150, a professional development program co-championed by the Privy Council Office and Policy Horizons Canada. The program was designed to support the development of new public servants, and to drive a culture change within the public service. The participants were invited to use foresight, design thinking and engagement tools to explore policy issues relating to diversity and inclusion.

INTRODUCTION

Members of the Feminist Government Team came from across the public service and from a variety of disciplines – policy, communications, law and science. We began our work knowing that gender inequality is still a challenge for Canada. For example, despite some of the highest levels of education in the OECD[1], and rising employment rates over the past 30 years for women[2], the gender pay gap remains[3]. There are still significantly few women in politics, on executive boards and in positions of power. Gender-based violence continues to be a problem – women are 20% more likely to be victims of violence than men, after all risk factors are taken into account[4]. Some groups, such as women with disabilities, Indigenous women, immigrant and refugee women, and women living in rural areas[5] are even more vulnerable. LGBTQ2 women and trans and non-binary people are also at higher risk of discrimination, marginalization and violence.

"We have to figure out how we are going to build a real equitable society or else we are just going to continue to be out of balance in the wrong way. That is up to government, that is up to civil society, that is up to everyone to think that one through." – Feminist Government Stakeholder

1 https://data.oecd.org/eduatt/adult-education-level.htm#indicator-chart
2 https://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-630-x/11-630-x2015009-eng.htm
3 http://www.macleans.ca/society/pay-equity-statistics-canada/
4 http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2013001/article/11766/11766-1-eng.htm
5 http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2013001/article/11766-eng.pdf

Canada and several foreign governments recognize the importance of gender equality and equity, and are taking measures, like applying gender-based analysis in the development of policies, programs and budgets.

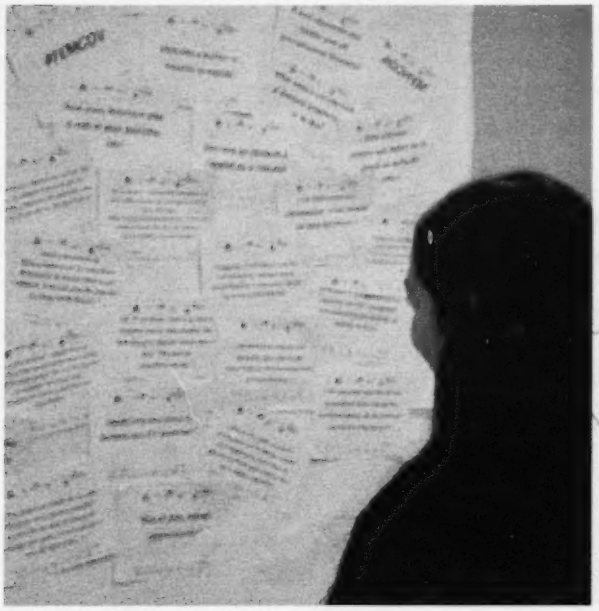
Issues affecting women, trans and non-binary people will keep changing and both government and society will have to respond.

This is what the Feminist Government Team explored through its work for the Canada Beyond 150 program.

JOURNEY WITH OUR STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholder engagement was particularly valuable to the Feminist Government Team as an avenue for both substantive and technical learning.

We met with over 50 experts, academics, community stakeholders and non-governmental organizations from across Canada, as well as colleagues within the public service. We used our engagements as opportunities for learning about feminist issues that were important to our stakeholders, as well as for co-development of our policy proposals and interventions.



Our interviews and co-creation processes included a range of intersectional voices and perspectives, including co-creation sessions with LGBTQ2 stakeholders and stakeholders who represent and/or are people of colour.

EARLY ENGAGEMENT: THE CULTURAL PROBE

Because our work was focused on being inclusive, we felt it necessary to gain the perspectives of youth, and get a sense of what feminism and feminist government means to them. We chose a simple cultural probe with some open-ended questions. While reaching our target audience was challenging due to time limits and the reach of our networks, the probe did get some meaningful responses. The probe asked some questions on Twitter, such as:

How does feminism play a role in your everyday life?

"Helps me see humanity through a compassionate lens, advocate equality for all on all fronts & encourages my critical thinking. #femgov"

"It has become a way of life... a way of challenging myself (checking my privilege) and challenging my environment for avenues of change."

What does a society with a feminist government look like?

"A #femgov in #canadabeyond150 would be one that incorporates intersectionality into all levels of decision-making."

"Well a #FemGov in #CanadaBeyond150 would be #inclusive & #accessible to all citizens. It would also be focused on long-term results."

INTERVIEWS

We first focused on stakeholders across the country that are often left out of national conversations on issues that are important to women, trans and non-binary people. These first interactions were less structured, to let stakeholders give us their views on the feminist government theme, tell us their main concerns, and share what they saw as future challenges.

Stakeholders openly shared their insights on issues like online and workplace harassment; the intersection of race, gender and delivery of public services; the need for more women in leadership positions (particularly in STEM and policing); the role of men in preventing gender-based violence; and the potential of women as champions of democratic values and institutions. Stakeholders, especially those from Winnipeg, often raised the issue of murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls as an ongoing problem.

The team's Indigenous stakeholders also emphasized the role of community and elements of Indigenous culture that could influence feminist government approaches and policies, and promote the well-being of Canadians.

"We are all part of the medicine wheel, we all must take care of our physical, mental, emotional and spiritual selves – we must help each other."
– Feminist Government Stakeholder

WHAT IS A FEMINIST GOVERNMENT?

The team decided not to develop a shared definition of feminist government, as the understanding of the theme varied from one participant to another. This worked in our favour, as it let us look at important social trends and issues that may have been neglected with a more defined approach. It enabled us to consider the underlying principles of a feminist government.

Over the course of our Canada Beyond 150 journey, we asked organizations, public servants, Canadians, and newcomers: "What is a feminist government?"

FOUR PRINCIPLES EMERGED FROM OUR STAKEHOLDERS

A FEMINIST GOVERNMENT IS:

Inclusive

It is responsive to the intersectional identities and experiences of the people it serves. A feminist government develops and delivers policies, programs, and services in a way that takes into account historical, social and political contexts; and the impact of an individual's gender identity or expression, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, marital status and/or religion.

This approach acknowledges and addresses the experience of discrimination based on different aspects of identity. Examples include the GBA+ model of analysis used across government, as well as the approach used throughout this project.

People-focused

It helps individuals live up to their potential by providing programs and services that reflect their needs and experiences.

Accessible

It meets people where they are and seeks to make services and programs more accessible, and participation in society and the economy easier. For Canada, this means creating policies and programs that reflect its responsibilities under the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Collaborative

It encourages collaboration between all levels of government, the private sector and citizens.

CO-CREATION AND ARRIVING AT A PROJECT FOCUS AND INTERVENTIONS

Based on our earlier foresight work, we developed plausible future scenarios to share with our stakeholders and identify policy opportunities and challenges. Over several sessions, we saw the lack of available services designed for the needs of marginalized communities as a prominent issue, eventually leading to deeper discussion on challenges facing immigrant and refugee women.

While the main challenges we heard included pay equity and financial autonomy, a number of stakeholders noted that specific programs and policies for newcomer women did not respond to their clients' individual needs, and many women felt that they still lacked the information to make informed decisions about their rights and safety, employment and family situations.

> "We need a system that is responsive to the immigrant experience, and that steps away from creating a traditional vs. Canadian culture binary."
> – Feminist Government Stakeholder

With regard to settlement, power dynamics, education and access to professional opportunities, and the need for personal networks upon arrival were all raised as particular challenges for newcomer women. This led us to see a potential need to consider an immigration angle in our interventions.

The team decided on a focus that would "reduce the number of immigrant/refugee women who are not making full use of their qualifications and skills in their working lives in Canada."

Moving forward, we kept in mind what our stakeholders told us about how important community empowerment and local settlement services are to newcomers. For example, while a distrust of government authority among refugees can be a barrier to using offered services, the right information or supports can prevent this. All these comments told us that our principles of feminist government – that it be inclusive, people-centred, accessible and collaborative – would be at the heart of our interventions.

POLICY INTERVENTIONS

Canada's foreign-born population could reach 30% by 2036[6]. Despite having higher levels of education than their Canadian-born counterparts, immigrant and refugee women earn less than Canadian-born women. They are also more likely to experience a mismatch between the skill requirements of their occupations and their education levels, and live in low-income households.[7]

Working with our stakeholders, including input from within government, the Feminist Government Team developed a primary intervention, a Feminist Newcomer Talent Hub for women, trans and non-binary people. The team also developed two interventions for this population that could be administered via the hub: the Social Impact Bond for Newcomer Career Advancement, and new Support for Immigrant and Refugee Entrepreneurs.

FEMINIST NEWCOMER TALENT HUB

While community housing services exist, and the work of these organizations was acknowledged by a number of stakeholders, we saw a desire for more support for women, and openness to new models of delivery. This included representatives from organizations that provide settlement services.

In response, we propose the concept of "newcomer talent hubs" that could be designed to support women, trans and non-binary people through their settlement journeys, helping their social and economic agency. In keeping with our principles of feminist government, these hubs' services and programs would be available to all newcomer women, trans and non-binary people.

"Education and self-determination go hand in hand – need to tackle social isolation of vulnerable groups."– Feminist Government Stakeholder

6 http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/171025/dq171025b-eng.htm
7 http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-503-x/2015001/article/14217-eng.htm

Design

Using a whole-of-government approach, the Government of Canada would act as a funding partner, a convenor, and a channel for collaboration with service providers to improve access to settlement services.

These hubs could radically simplify access to services by:

- having an online and physical presence for better access to people with disabilities or in rural and remote areas;
- offering virtual and/or human advisors who could help newcomers use services;
- encouraging collaboration between jurisdictions, community partners and the immigrants and refugees they serve;
- using active listening and empathy in engagement and program development; and
- meeting clients where they are according to their needs, especially refugees and survivors of violence (e.g., by using flexible and safe spaces already available in the community).

The hubs would also create a sense of community and belonging by inviting newcomers and former clients to participate in the hub's management as well as community-building activities.

The governance model could position this group in leadership roles with community partners and government, which would support the creation of broader social and professional networks for newcomers.

SOCIAL IMPACT BOND FOR NEWCOMER CAREER ADVANCEMENT

Quality job opportunities have both economic and social benefits for immigrants and refugees. Working at a higher level than "survival jobs" prevents de-skilling and can lead to higher pay, while building professional and social networks and encouraging well-being.

Vision

The Government of Canada could promote supporting newcomers with various skill levels and abilities, by providing small and medium-sized businesses with financial incentives for hiring newcomers and supporting their professional development.

An approach using Social Impact Bonds (SIBs), targeting small and medium-sized businesses, could be designed to promote two outcomes.

Initial hires: Employers would collaborate with third parties, such as employment agencies, to prepare and match newcomers with job opportunities to increase hiring of newcomers by small and-medium sized firms.

Job laddering: Employers would facilitate work-related learning opportunities for newcomers in their employ to be "laddered" into higher-skilled jobs, turning their entry-level positions into launch pads for career paths.

How?

Under the Social Impact Bond model, the government and employers, with input from stakeholders including job agencies, would first agree on the specifics of what a successful outcome for an "initial hire" or "job laddering" would look like. A monetary value would be assigned to each outcome, to be paid to the employer on completion, and a third-party evaluator would monitor the number of successful outcomes.

SUPPORT FOR IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE ENTREPRENEURS

Through the talent hub model, the Government of Canada has a unique opportunity to position Canada as an entrepreneur-friendly country by recognizing the skills and networks that immigrant and refugee women, trans and non-binary people bring. As a part of settlement, helping them turn these assets into entrepreneurial opportunities would benefit current-day newcomers and could help them endure changes to the nature of work.

New technologies are creating a more interconnected global business environment, and will likely lead to growth in remote and transnational work. Technological changes are also expected to reduce the number of people working in traditional employment arrangements, and to increase the number of people doing precarious work in the 'gig' economy.

Vision

The vision is two-fold:

1) That the Government of Canada would explore how to develop and deliver skills training for newcomers, especially refugees, that recognizes their potential and supports entrepreneurship; and
2) That newcomers to Canada would be recognized for their entrepreneurial potential by federal programs.

How?

We must do more to understand how Canada could support newcomer entrepreneurs through skills training and by ensuring that entrepreneurship programs do not exclude them. These efforts should recognize that, with the changing nature of work, newcomers can live and work in Canada while taking advantage of both local and global networks. For example, many countries have parts of their population scattered around the globe, which could offer new opportunities for collaboration, or new markets for entrepreneurs in Canada.

Entrepreneurship incubators, as part of the proposed newcomer talent hubs, could provide immigrant and refugee women with opportunities to access entrepreneurial skills training (e.g. financial literacy, tax law and business training), as well as mentorship and financing opportunities. The incubators could also connect these newcomers with additional support networks (e.g. community-based mental health supports, childcare and language training) related to the hubs.

THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Facilitating the learning of the participants has been a major part of this project. While the team benefited from learning about collaborative technologies, approaches to foresight, business intelligence, design thinking and "future-proofing" policy interventions, our work always came back to the core principles of a feminist government: that it be inclusive, people-focused, accessible and collaborative.

CONCLUSION

How can we realize these principles and build on the work that we've accomplished in the Canada Beyond 150 program? Our experience in developing our interventions suggests that using design thinking to develop engagement approaches could play a role, especially when tailoring policies to address the specific needs of Canadians. In working with our stakeholders to identify our focus and develop our interventions, we saw the potential benefits of co-creation with marginalized communities and their stakeholders.

If we can engage early and often, we can build trust over time and benefit from points of view we don't always have in policy development. In short, we need the time to do feminist government right.

FEMINIST GOVERNMENT

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